WORKSHEET 125 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

What if it were a friend?

Comparing how I speak to others and how I speak to myself

AIM

Highlight the double standard (kindness towards others, harshness towards oneself) and draw on the voice the person already uses with their loved ones.

WHO IT IS FOR

Self-criticism, guilt, high self-demands, people who are very attentive to others.

DURATION

15 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Ask how the person would react if a close friend were in the same situation: their words, their tone, their gestures.
2. Compare it with what they tell themselves in that same situation.
3. Explore the reasons for the difference (“if I’m kind to myself, I’ll slack off”).
4. Invite them to try speaking to themselves this week as they would to that friend.

POINTS TO WATCH

> The fear of “slacking off” is common: research shows the opposite, self-compassion sustains the motivation to improve after a failure (Breines and Chen, 2012). In people who are very self-critical or who have experienced abuse, self-kindness can at first bring up sadness, discomfort or mistrust (the “backdraft” described by Germer and Neff). This is to be expected: go more slowly, in small doses, and validate the difficulty.

REFERENCES

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Breines, J. G. & Chen, S. (2012). Self-compassion increases self-improvement motivation. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 38(9), 1133-1143.

Germer, C. K. & Neff, K. D. (2019). Teaching the Mindful Self-Compassion Program: A Guide for Professionals. Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 125 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

What if it were a friend?

Many people are gentle with others and very hard on themselves. Yet you already know how to speak kindly: you do it with your loved ones. It is about offering yourself that same voice.

1. Choose a situation in which you were hard on yourself.
2. Write what you would say to a close friend in the same situation.
3. Write what you said to yourself.
4. Write a sentence you could say to yourself, in the voice you use with your friend.

The situation	What I would say to a friend	What I said to myself	What I could say to myself

Why I think I am harder on myself than on others:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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